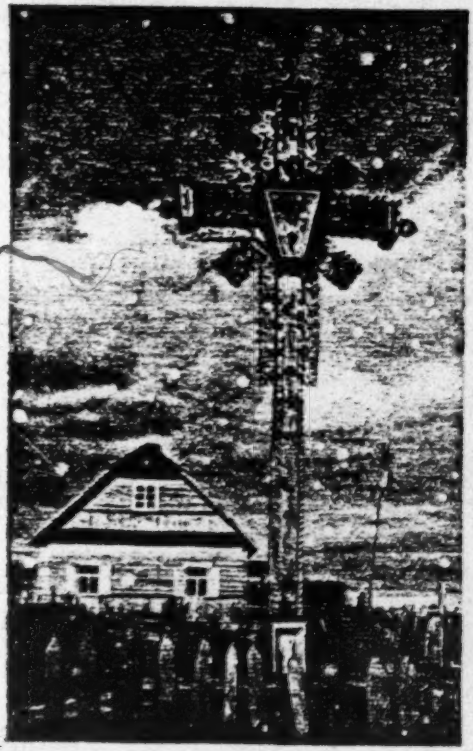
11:League of Nations G-4 (no date) 1939 RB5 Lithuanians RB5

IX. PEASANT ART AND FOLKLORE. ORGANISATION OF LEISURE

532 From time immemorial, the villagers have been fond of manual work. By the roadside, religious monuments decorated with original designs may be seen, such as crosses and chapels; in the villages, wooden churches and belfries and attractive wooden buildings, with original carvings, have been erected.

[415] In the houses themselves, the equipment and the domestic utensils are also made by hand. Furniture, spindles, linen-beaters, towel-pegs, nut-crackers are characteristic objects of peasant art. The girls were always fond of spinning, weaving and [286] knitting. When they married, they brought with them from their home a generous supply of cloth, towels, table-cloths, bed-covers, gaily coloured dresses, etc. At weddings, in particular, it was the custom to make presents of belts, towels, cloth, etc.



Crucifix.

After the world war, when Lithuania became independent, the cultural level rose; the old articles of peasant art, with their primitive forms, no longer fulfilled modern requirements. The Chamber of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Union of Young Farmers' Clubs, accordingly endeavoured to encourage cottage handicrafts, adapting them to modern conditions.

A series of courses was organised for peasant craftsmen, to teach them new methods and familiarise them with modern tools, better raw materials and modern shapes (for which artists prepared designs based on the traditional peasant styles.

[534] consisting of a pig's bladder, the long shepherd's horn.--The Lithuanian
533 is very gifted musically as well as poetically. His folk songs, the dainos, present in brief, firm trochaic measures and in soft iambs the sincere and heart-felt, vividly experienced joys and sorrows of a sensitive human soul which tends towards melancholy. These songs have frequently been translated, and they were greatly appreciated by Herder and Goethe. The latter reproduced a daina in his musical play, Die Fischerin. The tenderness and fervor of the folk poetry is repeated in
764 the appearance and the mood of the graveyards. Their silents seclusion along mountain slopes and on hilltops, their--romantically neglected --enclosures of flowers and creepers, their enormous, dark, and forcibly admonitory Golgotha crosses and moss-covered crucifixes with the instruments of torture, the sight of which and the walk through which, make them into veritable experiences. In spite of all the neglect, one is conscious here that the Lithuanian is close to his dead, even if such customs have disappeared, as still existed during the 16th century, according to which the deceased was placed fully dressed on a chair and wailing women were made to sing songs of mourning around him.

/31: Illustrations./

/32/ The Lithuanians.

II.

000 1. Lithuanian farmer. 2. Costume of the 17th century. 3. Costume of the 19th century. 4. Tub. 5. Earthenware pot. 6.-10 Pots. 11. Spoon. 12. Ladle. 13, 14. Salt grinders. 15. Pouch made of birch bark used for collecting berries. 16. Butter tub made of a hollowed-out stem. 17. Chair with a perforated back. 18. Spoons. 19. Flax-scutcher and basket made of straw-ropes used to store grain.[1]

●415 It is of course impossible for the Lithuanian wood culture to
[322] remain exclusively such today. Stampers and grinders and the tankards for the ancient native barley beer are still fashioned in the completely original manner by being worked out of a solid block and hollowed out. But, however much this is true, and, however much birch bark is still used, there exists, nevertheless, home-made earthenware, next to the wood products, especially in the fringe areas. But even the

[1] [For illustrations, see 1: Karutz, E1 Europe, cat.116, p.28a--#analyst]

[415] earthenware remains completely simple in technique and form. In
291 the way of clothing the old has not been preserved. Figure 2, from
177 the 17th century, points to similarities with the Letts. In East Prussia, German influences then had their effect, and beyond the border Polish
771 influences made themselves felt. For a long time, until well into the 19th century, remnants of the ancient religion were preserved. This religion was a knowledge of divine forces in nature, everywhere, from the sun and the stars to the plants and stones; as well as a knowledge of the unity between nature and man, of inner and lasting relations and interinfluences between them. How clearly the divine in nature was beheld is indicated by conceptions like the one that believes that actual pain is inflicted upon the deity if the bark is peeled off the trees! How clearly the unity was experienced is to be seen from the custom of keeping trees in the farmyard, with the thriving of which the prosperity and health of the inhabitants remained connected; or from folk songs like the following:

Alas, I poor man went hence,
Cried bitter tears.
Was not the oak tree
Transformed into my father.

Gnome-like earth spirits lived in the roots of the juniper bushes--not reminiscences of tiny original inhabitants of the type familiar among the Reindeer Lapps, as has been stated, but clearsighted visions of elementary beings. Spring, summer, and autumn festivals united the people for the communal experience of the light, the sun as the spiritual center of the world and of existence; in sacred forests
793 they came to the gods and sacrificed to them. Yes, the chief of the
771 Waideloten priesthood, the Kriwe, sacrificed himself after he had become old; he admonished the people to do penance, climbed upon the stake, let himself be burned and knew that he would rise up the gods in the flames. In the same sense, it was considered a particular sign of divine mercy to be struck and killed by lightning. At one time the religious knowledge and feeling was guarded by a liberally organized, but nevertheless hierarchically ordered priesthood with an elected chief priest, and these were mediated to the people in exoteric forms. Then they maintained a perpetual fire which, only in the year 1387, was ceremoniously extinguished for ever in the castle at Vilna by the duke Jagello(!). Then they made sacrifices to the sun, they prophesied